

**Keynote Address of the President/Vice-
Chancellor OUM
YBhg Prof Tan Sri Anuwar Ali
for the Opening Ceremony
of the Teaching and Learning Colloquium
on 25 August 2006 (Friday) at 8.00 pm
at Ballroom 1, Level 9, The Legend Hotel, Kuala
Lumpur**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim
Yang Berbahagia Dato' Prof Dr Hassan Said
Director General, Department of Higher Education
Management
Ministry of Higher Education

Professor Dr Ansary Ahmed
Senior Vice President, Open University Malaysia
cum Chairman of Teaching and Learning Colloquium

The Management and Academics of OUM

Invited Guests

OUM's Participating Tutors and Learners

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum Warahmattulahi Wabarakatuh and
a very good evening.

1. It is my pleasure to be here today to address this esteemed gathering. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Yang Berbahagia Dato' Prof Dr Hassan Said, Director General, Department of Higher Education Management, Ministry of Higher Education, who also sits in OUM Board of Directors, for being with us gracing the opening ceremony. His presence has indeed made the event more significant. I would like to thank OUM management as well as our respected tutors and learners who are all specially selected participants of the Teaching and Learning Colloquium.
2. Judging by the diverse list of speakers and participants attending this forum, I am sure that it will be a highly interesting and productive event for all. The main objective of this colloquium is to create awareness, understand pedagogical approaches and sustain as well as improve best practices that are related to

teaching and learning methods in an ODL environment.

3. Since its establishment, OUM has not stopped from assessing new ways of improving our teaching and learning approaches, in tandem with our vision '*to be the leader and innovator in open and distance learning*'. One such improvement that we have made continuously, is in our Blended Learning approach. As most of you would know, OUM offers flexible blended learning via three main modes: (1) self-managed learning, (2) F2F learning, and (3) online learning. Recently we had also starting offering pure ONLINE to our learners, thus providing more flexible options to our learners.
4. By allowing our learners the freedom to choose where, when, and what they want to learn and how they want to go through their study programmes, our learning mode explicitly differentiates us from other conventional higher

learning institutions and the teaching and learning approaches vary slightly from the traditional method. Therefore, one of the reasons we are here is to add-value to our knowledge towards these approaches and discover new and innovative orientations in the ODL environment.

5. The gathering of tutors and learners in this Colloquium is aimed at creating a sense of togetherness by which we all can acquire and realise the resources, pedagogical advancements and new heights of expectations in open learning; be it in the form of providing knowledge to the students or acquiring knowledge from the tutors.
6. Through the sharing and understanding of experiences, we can observe familiar trends and patterns; trends that can establish the common principles for change, growth and success. Therefore, in the spirit of learning, and in the hope of contributing further to our

understanding of ODL patterns and principles, this colloquium provides adequate space for presentation, interaction, knowledge sharing and discussion among participants.

7. I believe the two and a half day deliberations will be a good platform for tutors and students alike to discuss our support and operational issues which are directly related to their experiences in OUM. This is also a good opportunity for our faculty members and staff to build networking and better understand the needs of OUM tutors and learners to further enhance our support and services to them.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

8. Perhaps it is also pertinent for me to share OUM's expectations from the tutors and learners, as well as share what OUM's strategies are, in meeting those expectations. We would certainly expect our tutors to diligently engage the minds of learners with

various learning strategies, more so, those that are highly dependent on-line learning. In our ODL mode, this process requires the tutors to incorporate motivational approaches in the face-to-face tutorials and online discussion forums so that the learners are constantly inspired to play an active role in learning, while simultaneously enjoying the learning process. This strategy helps to build robust and trusting learning relationships among tutors and learners.

9. By now, OUM tutors are very familiar with the online facilities provided to them. Tutors I hope are indeed capable of adapting and incorporating teaching and learning instructional strategies to support students' needs via these facilities. A variety of teaching strategies can be utilised in the tutorial classes that promote reflection and enable learners to understand from different viewpoints and foster experimentation, as long as these strategies

are ethical and do not breach OUM's code of conduct.

10. Another area of interest for our tutors is the level and depth of knowledge sharing or networking among tutors. The importance of sharing knowledge as well as intellectual resources among the tutors must never be underestimated. No university is an island, more so in an open and distance learning environment. Over time, most universities will secure huge databases of resources, but at OUM, necessity is the mother of invention; and we have already started making this available via OUM's Learning Management System or popularly known as myLMS since 2003. Given that OUM tutors have diverse educational backgrounds and attached to various institutions and organisations across the country, but having access to myLMS, they must be able to utilise the system to foster effective teaching.

11. Besides myLMS, OUM also provides other online platforms in the form of Learners' Connexions and Tutor Connexion, the latter for tutors to contribute their ideas, research, teaching materials and experiences. However, these facilities are not utilised to the maximum, therefore I call upon OUM tutors to contribute and participate more actively in order to build quality teaching and learning resources. However, I am pleased to know that a majority of the tutors had participated actively in the Teaching and Learning Colloquium's Online Discussion Forum created early this year.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. Someone once said that education is the knowledge of putting one's potential to maximum use. Going by this simple definition, one can say that a human being is not in the proper sense till he or she is 'educated'. Generally, education helps in developing two important qualities. First, to help individuals to

master knowledge and second, to help build good character. Following these principles, it is OUM's responsibility to help learners not only to achieve their own potential, but also to make an important contribution to the development of the community and nation.

13. OUM has been having a good record of recruiting learners from a wide range of social, ethnic, economic, cultural and educational backgrounds. It offers a greater access for those who have been deprived of tertiary education. In many ways, this is our contribution in filling the gap for Malaysian educational attainment, particularly where selection to public universities is highly competitive and restrictive. At OUM, we want to make a point; that everyone deserves an equal chance to pursue their education.
14. The spirit of education is thus captured in the most caring manner. Opening the door of opportunity, this university offers an excellent

educational pathway for working adults who find it difficult to enrol in a full-time programme due to their work and other responsibilities. Adults have other burdens to shoulder such as their children's education, caring for the aged and fulfilling other social obligations which all need their time, effort and money.

15. Now at last, adult education has become widely available and at the same time acceptable by our Malaysian society. While this is a profound change in people's perception towards adult learning – and obviously about ODL – we should be equally convinced that adult learners can be extremely motivated to learn as they have a more focused reason.
16. By defining and understanding the learners' needs, OUM upholds the commitment to adhere to an international standard of excellence for faculty and curriculum which should inevitably be learner-centred and dedicated to interactive learning; one that

stimulates inquiry and analysis, encourages critical thinking and builds the foundation for lifelong learning. We aim to produce students with strong ethical value and who have a broad understanding and in depth knowledge of societal imperatives in a rapidly changing political and economic environment.

17. OUM learners are provided with various online facilities to support their learning. A variety of educational programs and events for learners had been organised by OUM to enhance their learning experiences and motivation. I would sincerely urge our learners to capitalise the usage of IT and online facilities provided by OUM for the betterment of their academic attainment. We would like to see more participation and commitment from the learners in OUM activities such as those that promote good learning experiences. These are conduits that will I believe enrich the learners' intellectual capacity and learning process.

18. At the same time we would like to see our learners as distinguished individuals not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to the community. They will leave OUM not only with a thorough grounding of knowledge of their programme, but also as people, who are able to make productive judgements based on good values and high civic consciousness.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Higher education institutions are expected to provide broad intellectual leadership within the community, as well as equip people with skills that go beyond the vocation and foster critical thinking and innovation. At OUM we support academic independence which I believe is paramount guiding principle if universities were to act as the conscience and leading light of society. This colloquium will play an important role in disseminating such an academic paradigm.

20. Most of us here, whether we are tutors or learners, must therefore be aware of the need to learn from each other. All participants are encouraged to look at best practices in relation to teaching and learning in open and distance learning, and these best practices may come from any section of the society, be it from the tutors or students. The main determining factor would be our willingness to learn from each other and to share knowledge amongst us, including in this particular gathering between tutors and students who have regarded OUM as a family.
21. Emphasising the importance of a supportive cultural climate Amartya Sen (the great Indian economist and a Nobel Laureate in Economics) wrote in his latest book Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny (2006) p 111-112) about Japan:

“Japan’s entire experience of economic development was to a great extent, driven by human-capability formation, which included the role of education and training, Promoted both by public policy and a supportive cultural climate of interacting with each other. The dynamics of associative relations are extraordinarily important in understanding Japan”.

He went on to say:

“Culture does not sit still. The brief recollection of the education transformation of Japan and Korea, with profound cultural implications, illustrated the importance of change, linked-as it often is – with public discussion and policy. Any presumption of stationariness – explicit or implicit – can be disastrously deceptive.”

Let us therefore, who are gathered here, make a small step during the next two days to instill an awareness amongst our Malaysian

population on the need for working together, particularly in promoting life-long learning.

22. To our dedicated tutors, I believe that your contribution towards OUM's expansion and learning experience is beyond the expected financial returns, but more importantly, it is an important component of your dedication as an excellent educationist and teacher.

You certainly have the opportunity to shape the minds, lives and careers of OUM learners. By making a great choice to be an OUM tutor. Let's make a difference in the lives of our learners.

23. To our respected learners, you are practically our ambassadors. It is our hope that as members of this new generation, you will be passionately driven your own wide knowledge, inspiration and thirst for education. You are the role models in your respective institutions in

this country and hopefully will create a positive change in our learning culture.

24. Before ending my speech, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee members for successfully organising this colloquium. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Yang Berbahagia Dato' Prof Hassan, for being so supportive of OUM's programmes. Last but not least, my sincere thanks go to all participants who are taking time off from your busy schedule to be present here for the three days. Lastly, I wish all participants a fruitful and successful deliberations.

Thank you very much.